



Community Relations Commission ~ Minutes ~

Thursday, February 13, 2020

City Hall, Second Floor
Rockford, IL 61104

<http://www.rockfordil.gov/>

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Todd Burton called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

A. Roll Call

Commissioner Name	Status
Eric Brown	Present
Todd Burton	Present
Jurea Crudup	Absent
Victoria De La Rosa	Present
Erin Hannigan	Absent
Nikki Lynch	Absent
William Martin	Present
Anqunette Parham	Present
Ricardo Montoya Picazo	Absent
Charles Prorok	Present
Jay Ware	Present

B. Acceptance of Proceedings for the Community Relations Commission meeting held on January 9, 2020.

Because there was not a quorum, acceptance of the proceedings for the January 9th meeting was held over and will be placed on the March 12, 2020 meeting agenda.

II. PUBLIC SPEAKERS

1. Scheduled public speaker Mustafa Abdall was not able to attend the meeting.

III. INFORMATION ONLY

A. 2020 Census: Wester Wuori

The Mayor's Chief of Staff, Wester Wuori, presented to the Commission on the 2020 Census and the Regional Complete Count Committee.

Wuori provided information about the Regional Complete Count Council, which has representatives from five counties in Illinois (Winnebago, Boone, Ogle, Stephenson, and DeKalb) and organizes efforts around communication, education, and advocacy for the 2020 census campaign. Wuori also advised the Commission that the City has received approximately \$158,000 in grant funds to help communicate, educate, and advocate that members of the community participate in the 2020 Census.

During his presentation, Wuori provided the following information about the 2020 Census:

- Since 1790, the U.S. census takes place every ten years, as mandated in the United States Constitution.



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- There are only nine questions on the census survey.
- Each person in the U.S. is counted once, based upon where the person is living on April 1, 2020.
 - Each person counts, regardless of age or residency status. Questions regarding citizenship will not be on the census.
- Between March 12th and March 20th, the U.S. Census Bureau will mail out instructions on how to complete the census.
 - This year for the first time people will be able to fill it out online, as well as by phone or paper mail.
- Beginning in May and going through July, federally employed census takers will be walking neighborhoods and going to homes where people have not filled out their census.
- By law, on December 31st, the Census Bureau delivers the count to the President.
- Census data determines how federal assistance money is allocated. Many community programs, services and organizations receive federal funding.
 - The Census determines funding for fifty five major federal funding programs.
 - For every one person that is not counted our community loses approximately \$15,000.00 over ten years.
 - The Census Bureau are projecting the number of potential persons not counted in Winnebago County will be 59,000.
- Census data is also used to determine our democratic representation.
 - Illinois will lose at least one congressional seat in the next round of redistricting based upon population loss. We need a complete count in our city, region, and state to keep the loss of congressional seats to just one.
- Federal law prohibits the sharing of personal information from census surveys with immigration, defense department, law enforcement, or any other government agency.

B. Fire Department Overview: Chief Derek Bergsten

Fire Chief Derek Bergsten presented the Commission with an overview of the department he leads. Created in 1881, the Rockford Fire Department is the second largest fire department in the State of Illinois. Chief Bergsten provided the following information about the department:

Mission and Vision of the Department

Vision Statement: The members of the Rockford Fire Department are professionals dedicated to provide services that are innovative and progressive ensuring the safest environment for our community.

Mission Statement: The mission of the Rockford Fire Department is to protect lives and property of our community through fire, emergency medical and life safety service.

History of Fire Department and Incident Statistics

In 1920 the City of Rockford was 10 square miles with a population of 75,000 people. It had 590 calls for service, 84 employees and 6 fire stations. In 2019, the City of Rockford was 65.07 square miles, with a population of 150,000 people. There were 28,000 calls for service, 260 employees, and 11 fire stations.

Chief Bergsten stated the fire department has been steadily growing by 2.9% every year since 2000. The most frequent type of calls the fire department receives are for EMS & search and rescue services. The City of Rockford has a structure fire every 34 hours—this higher rate is in part related our vacant housing and areas of our community that are financially challenged.

Services Offered

The Rockford Fire Department provides the following services: fire suppression, EMS, technical rescue (including trench rescue), hazardous materials response for all of Winnebago County, and water rescue (for the City and Winnebago County). The Prevention Division of the department does inspections, education, and fire cause and origin inquiries (the City's department has the highest investigation solve rate in the state). Fire investigators have police powers to do arrests and issue warrants.

Chief Bergsten explained that the Rockford Fire Department is the first department in the state to have a Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) Program, which involves partnership with local hospitals to obtain information about patients who have been frequently seen or admitted through the emergency room. A member of the department then visits the person at home to follow up—providing medical services, blood pressure check, drug checks, and follow up on support systems for the person. The people must sign a waiver, which allows the fire fighters to contact their primary care physician and connect them with social and other services they may need. Additional information about the MIH included:

- It has been very beneficial program that aligns with the department's mission. They have made over 21,000 calls through MIH.
- The department checks every home they visit for working smoke and CO alarms and if there are not any in the home, they will install them.
- They check for places in the home conducive to slips, trips, and falls. Anything hazardous that a member of the department or partner agency can prevent, they work to address.
- The MIH Program covers the City of Rockford, as well as Winnebago and Boone Counties.

911 Center

Chief Bergsten explained there are only three reasons to call 911: there is a crime in progress, there is a medical emergency, or there is a fire. All other calls should go to the non-emergency number.

The emergency response system includes dispatchers who work twelve-hour days. They do an incredible job--dispatchers answer a 911 call within 5 seconds. The 911 Center takes over



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200,000 calls a year between non-emergency and 911 landline and 911 wireless. Forty percent of calls with delayed responses are caused from people not knowing their addresses.

Accreditation

The City of Rockford Fire Department is accredited by the Center for Public Safety Excellence, which is an international organization. There are only 240 fire departments in the world that are accredited by this agency. The department is also accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Service. The City of Rockford Fire Department is one of only 10 departments in the United States that has dual accreditation with both of these agencies.

Community Driven Strategic Planning

Chief Bergsten stated that strategic planning is something his organization takes very seriously, and invites the public to participate. Last Tuesday, the department worked with 44 community members at Khlem Arboretum to evaluate the fire department services and rate what they thought was important. Chief Bergsten explained that the department then takes this information and uses it to drive the goals and objectives of the fire department for the next four or five years.

What's Next?

Chief Bergsten advised that the current eligibility list expires in October of 2021 and that they are continuously recruiting to fill positions. Fire positions with the department are very competitive; there are usually around 800 applicants prior to the testing process. Applicants will not make it into the department without an Associates or Bachelor's Degree in Fire Science or military background. City Council has recently passed a resolution that if an applicant lives in the City of Rockford they will get five points, which helps Rockford residents be more competitive.

Chief Bergsten also stated the department would like to expand the MIH Program to do Narcan Knock Talks. Nine months ago, they started a partnership with the Winnebago County Health Department. Through this partnership, a community paramedic visits a person within 24 to 48 hours after an overdose to talk to the person and provide Narcan to the household, including training on how to use it. Chief Bergsten reported they have already saved over 12 people's lives in six months. If a person they visit is ready to enter rehab, they have a direct connect with Rosecrance to get them into a program within two to three hours.

IV. COMMISSIONERS REPORTS

Commissioner Parham stated that this would be her last Commission meeting. Mayor McNamara has appointed her as the Executive Director of the City's Human Services Department, pending City Council approval. As a result, she will no longer be able to serve on the Commission. She is excited to serve in a different capacity, and to continue very similar work. She has enjoyed being on the Commission.



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Commissioner De La Rosa acknowledged receiving a copy of the Project Safe Neighborhoods grant discussed at last month's meeting. She expressed concern because she has received reports that people are being picked up by ICE through the probation department at the courthouse. In the last 30 days, these reports indicate that two individuals have gone to probation department meetings with their probation officers and have not come home because they were taken into ICE custody. Commissioner De La Rosa posed the question: is Winnebago County Probation subject to the Illinois TRUST Act? Legal Director Nicholas Meyer stated he would contact the Winnebago County State's Attorney to get an answer to the question. Director Meyer stated had not heard these reports.

Commissioner Brown stated that on February 24th he will be meeting with members of the deaf and hard of hearing community and the police department at the New Towne Police Station regarding how the police are interacting with members of the deaf community. He welcomed anyone interested to attend.

Commissioner Martin asked if information about events discussed during meetings could be emailed to the Commissioners afterward.

Commissioner Burton informed everyone that there will be a black history month event on Saturday, February 15th at 1:00 p.m. at Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum. The event is titled "Capturing American History, the Unique Perspective of the African American Female Service Member."

Director Meyer reminded Commissioners that the link to receive the Community Connection was sent to them last week. This is a communication sent monthly to keep people informed of upcoming events and newsworthy items in the Rockford community.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:13 p.m.